

TESTIMONY OF ALISON BEYEA, ESQ.

LD 433 – Ought To Pass

**RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine
To Explicitly Prohibit Discrimination Based on the Sex of an Individual**

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

March 7, 2019

Senator Carpenter, Representative Bailey, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary: My name is Alison Beyea, and I am the Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine, a statewide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil rights and civil liberties guaranteed by the Maine and U.S. Constitutions.

I am proud to be here today on behalf of our more than 10,000 members in Maine – and on behalf of my mother, my daughter, and for myself – to support LD 433.

For almost 100 years, the ACLU has been at the forefront of the struggle to win full legal equality for all women. Since its founding, the ACLU has argued more women's rights cases before the United States Supreme Court than any other organization. In 1970, we endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment, and established our Women's Rights Project soon after, directed by then-professor Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

My mother, Patricia Ramsey, was an organizer for the Women's Rights Project during that time. One of my earliest memories from childhood is attending an ERA rally in San Antonio, and cheering along with others who were standing up for equal rights.

Justice Ginsburg made the case for the Equal Rights Amendment like this: we can achieve things through legislation, but "legislation can be repealed, it can be altered. ... So I would like my granddaughters, when they pick up the Constitution, to see that notion – that women and men are persons of equal stature – I'd like them to see that is a basic principle of our society."

That's a goal I share: I would like my mother – my civil rights icon, who is here today – and my daughter – my hope for the future – to see equal protection for women in the Maine Constitution.

While it's clear that we have made strides even without the adoption of an ERA, progress has been slow, uneven, and not without setbacks.

While many women have more opportunities today than ever before, we know that there is still a gender gap in pay, that women are still a minority in corporate leadership and in government nationwide, that there are constant challenges to reproductive rights, and that serious issues of violence, harassment and disparate treatment impact women every day.

Forty-five years ago, Maine declared its support for equal rights when it ratified the Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution. And since then, 17 states have adopted similar forms of an equal rights amendment to their state constitutions. It's time that Maine joined them. Let's not let another generation of Maine girls grow up without full equality under the law.

It's time to enshrine full legal equality for women in the Maine Constitution. I urge you to support LD 433 and stand clearly on the side of supporting civil rights and civil liberties for all Mainers.

Thank you.